

Rep. Elsie Arntzen
850 Senora Ave.
Billings, MT 59105

EXHIBIT

DATE

HB

Dec. 28, 2006

House Local Government Committee,

I appreciate your service to this committee. As you can see by the list of members, we are one of the largest legislative committees. Our committee will meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 3 p.m., on the first floor in room 172. Enclosed you also will find general information concerning committee proceedings and rules of procedure.

As an overview, most of our committee dealings will fall under Title 7 of the MCA, but not exclusively. Title 7 dictates how local governments, cities and towns, operate. It handles general provisions, financial administration and taxation, law enforcement and fire protection, housing and construction, weed and pest control, and numerous other special purpose districts that are authorized by law.

At present 50 potential bill drafts await our attention if they are introduced. Sonja Lee, who recently joined the Legislative Services Division, will be our staffer. As a Roundup native, she brings experience in local government issues. Our secretary is Pam Schindler, who worked with House Judiciary last session.

We will convene the second day of the session, January 4th at 3 p.m. in room 172. Our first agenda will be informational in nature. After brief introductions of members and staff, we will go over committee rules and procedures. There also will be an introduction of lobbyists who regularly attend our hearings. They will share information about their organization, but not about pending legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can further your understanding of the workings of our committee. I am looking forward to the good work that we will put forward in this coming session.

A prosperous New Year to you and yours,

Sincerely,

Rep. Elsie Arntzen

GENERAL COMMENTS ON COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Hearings on Bills

The Committee Chair can limit the time available for testimony if it appears a lot of people want to testify and meeting time is limited. The Chair also controls the decorum of the hearing and can ask people to quit conversing or take their conversations outside of the committee room. Also, people may not speak unless called upon by the Chair.

Everyone who wants to testify must be given the opportunity to do so. Written testimony is not required but should be encouraged by the Chair. Witnesses should give their name and place of residence and who they represent before they begin testifying.

The secretary should get copies of all written testimony presented to the Committee.

During the question-and-answer period, Committee members should direct any questions of audience members through the Chair.

Executive Action

All bills in a committee must be acted upon by either reporting the bill out of Committee or by tabling the bill in Committee. The Committee can report the bill with one of the following recommendations:

- do pass
- do pass as amended
- do not pass
- refer to another committee

Before debate begins there should be a motion for action on the bill. It is suggested that the Committee Chair not entertain a motion to table as the first motion because a table motion is nondebateable.

Once a motion is offered, debate and discussion on the bill can begin. Only Committee members are allowed to discuss the bill during executive action. People in the audience may observe the discussion but cannot participate. If a Committee member would like someone from the audience to answer a question, that is allowed if the Committee agrees. The person must simply answer the question and cannot offer any additional testimony either for or against the bill. Staff is not allowed to participate in the discussion unless asked a question by a Committee member.

A motion to amend a bill is allowed at any time during debate. Once an amendment is offered, discussion must then center only on the amendment. Following discussion, a vote on the amendment is then taken. Once the vote on the amendment is completed, the entire bill can be discussed.

The following motions, which will end debate, are allowed at any time during the debate on a bill:

- to table
- to postpone consideration
- to refer bill to another committee

Voting can be done by voice, show of hands, or roll call.